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DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

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PAGE 01 SAIGON 11523 171419Z

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ACTION EA-15

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

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INFO USDEL FRANCE

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SAIGON 11523

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ON CON SON.

1. PRIME MINISTER KHIEM TOLD BERGER AND ME TODAY THAT HE HAS TOLD PRESIDENT THIEU THAT CON SON NEEDS REFORMS AND THAT "TIGER CAGES" SHOULD BE CONVERTED INTO WAREHOUSE SPACE. KHIEM SAID HE HOPES TO MAKE A STATEMENT ON CON SON ON JULY 20, AND WILL SHOW IT TO BERGER IN ADVANCE.

2. I MENTIONED THAT CONGRESSMAN CRANE WAS ARRIVING SOON AND HAD ASKED US TO REQUEST GVN'S PERMISSION FOR HIM TO VISIT CON SON ON JULY 22. I SAID REQUEST HAD BEEN MADE TO HIS OFFICE BUT WE HAD HEARD NOTHING. KHIEM GAVE NO REPLY, AND I AM NOT CERTAIN WHAT OUTCOME WILL BE. WE HAVE HEARD THAT THIEU IS ANNOYED WITH AMERICAN CONGRESSMEN AND OTHERS (COMMITTEE ON RECONCILIATION) AND HAS SAID HE WANTS MUCH FIRMER POLICY WITH RESPECT TO VISITORS.

3. BERGER WILL FOLLOW UP ON CRANE REQUEST.
BUNKER

SECRET

State Dept. declassification & release instructions on file

1 2 JUL 1970

Green Berets, in War Since '62, Being Phased Out This Year

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 11—The Green Berets, troops of the United States Special Forces, who were the first American fighting men in this country early in the nineteen sixties, will be phased out of South Vietnam by the end of this year, according to reliable military sources.

In their heyday, the Special Forces in South Vietnam numbered about 2,700 men and commanded a 45,000-man mercenary army of hill tribesmen and ethnic Cambodians, Chinese and Vietnamese. At the height of their operations, they ran more than 60 remote posts, primarily along the rugged border with Laos and Cambodia.

Starting in mid-1967, the Green Berets, so known because of their headgear, began turning over a few camps to South Vietnamese authorities.

By the spring of last year, seven camps had been transferred, the mercenaries in them being given a chance either to stay and join the regular military, or go home. Most reportedly stayed. But in the 18 months since then, the Special Forces have turned over all but a handful of posts, and are under orders to complete the transfer by December, the sources say.

The reasons for this sudden acceleration appear to be varied.

One ranking military man said the move was designed to end the use of mercenaries, to clarify and simplify the South Vietnamese command lines, and to de-Americanize another phase of the military effort.

Another source suggested that the displeasure of American commanders over the circumstances surrounding the alleged shooting in the summer of 1969 of a Vietnamese double agent employed by the Green Berets was a major factor in the rush order to the Special Forces to complete their work and move out.

Special Forces headquarters in Nha Trang declined a recent request for an interview. In past years the Green Berets have been eager to respond to similar inquiries.

Special Forces specialists in counterinsurgency warfare first came to South Vietnam in 1962. They were on loan to the Central Intelligence Agency, which wanted to set up border posts to spy on and occasionally harass North Vietnamese and Vietcong units moving from Laos and Cambodia.

About two years later, when the mission became too big and too expensive for the C.I.A. to hide, it was turned over entirely to the Special Forces and run openly under Army financing.

Many military analysts regard that program as one of the most successful in the entire war effort. And yet, the men of the Special Forces have managed to be controversial both within and outside the Army.

Elite Status Decried

Within the Army, some generals criticized the creation of an elite force, as separate and better than other Army units. Others decried the fact that the Special Forces attracted the more talented and imaginative men, who the critics felt were needed in the Army.

Outside the military, the Special Forces sometimes conjured up an aura of swashbuckling adventurers in uniform, who brushed aside the normal rules of conduct to accomplish what they felt was their mission.

The mysterious case of the disappearance of Thai Khac Chuyen, the suspected double agent, who allegedly was killed and his body encased in a canvas sack and dumped into the South China Sea, probably supported that image, however rightly or wrongly.

The Army first brought charges against several members of the Special Forces in the Chuyen case, and then dropped them, noting that prosecution would depend in part on C.I.A. testimony and that the agency was unwilling to participate in the case on national security grounds.

Sources here say that a small number of Special Forces men may conceivably remain in Vietnam to help train South Vietnamese Special Forces.